DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 169 RC 011 982

AUTHOR Jerez Gomez, Maximo J.
TITLE Background on Non-Formal Education and Suggestions for the Improvement of Non-Formal Education in Developing Countries and the Dominican Republic.
PUB DATE 4 Dec 79
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Change Agents; *Citizen Participation; Community Development; Community Education; *Developing Nations; Development; Educational Methods; *Extension Education; Government Role; *Nonformal Education; Nonschool Educational Programs; *Rural Development
IDENTIFIERS *Dominican Republic

ABSTRACT

Divided into two areas of emphasis, this paper explores the potential of non-formal education in developing countries and non-formal education as it relates to the Dominican Republic. The first section presents background material on non-formal education and discusses types of programs being applied in a number of countries throughout the world. Much of the second section is based upon three years of observation and experience afforded the author while working for the Extension Service of the Dominican Republic. The first part of this section describes the structure and function of each level of the Extension Service, ranging from the Secretaria de Estado de Agriculture at the highest level down to the Area Agropecuaria, whose sub-agents work directly with participants in the development process. Nine suggestions for non-formal education in the Dominican Republic conclude the paper. For example, it is suggested: (1) that preliminary evaluation be conducted to determine specific community needs; (2) that the community select its own development program, course or project, as well as program leader; (3) that the program be continuously revived by radio, television, written materials, etc. in order to maintain the attention and interest of participants. (DS)

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BACKGROUND ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE DOMONICAN REPUBLIC

By Máximo J. Jerez Gómez

Presented to:

Dr. Harold M. Bergsma for the
Honors 344 (Education As A Life Process)

New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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RC011932

BACKGROUND ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

This paper is presented as a requirement for the HONORS 344 (Education As A Life Process) Fall, 1979, New Mexico State University.

The aim of this paper is:

(1) To present two important reasons (population trend and food supplies) for the investigation, the analyses, and the application of non-formal educational programs in developing countries.

(2) To present a background on non-formal education and some programs that are being applied in the world.

(3) To present some suggestions to improve the programs on non-formal education through the Extension Service in the Dominican Republic.

REASONS FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

To understand the necessity for non-formal educational programs and the importance of their effecitveness in solving (or at least alleviating) current problems, it is necessary first to consider some of the factors that cause the problems. The world's population trend and food supplies are two of the major factors that are reducing the possibilities of an ever larger number of person's capability to live with dignity as human beings. These factors are forcing the world into a situation in which people have to be much more efficient to survive. Also, they are sufficient reasons to start, and to support non-formal educational programs in order to teach and to make the lay population aware of what is going on and integrate these people into the socio-economical process as active agents of change.

WORLD'S POPULATION TREND

The NFE Exchange, in its double issue of May/July, 1977, states that: "It took more than one million years for the world population to reach one billion

persons but only 120 years for that population to double. Adding the third billion took just 32 years and the forth required only 15 years. Today, some 70 million persons are born every year..." The United Nations population statistics showed that in 1950, 21% of the world's people were living in cities of 20,000 or more, in 1960, 25%, and nearly 28% in 1970 (MacDowell, 1974).

WORLD'S FOOD SUPPLIES

Another important problem is that of the food supplies of the world. In the developing countries the annual rise in production per capita has been about 3% and nearly 11% in others (MacDowell, 1974). More than 10% of the world's people were malnourished or starving in the mid-1970's. An Interim report of the National Research Council made in 1975 estimated that 95% of the people who receive insufficient calories and protein live in developing countries. A conservative view suggests that 60 developing countries were deficient in food energy supplies in 1970. It is also estimated that 25% to 30% of the population in the Far East and Africa suffer from signigicant malnutrition. Malnutrition affects at least half a billion people and quite possibly more (Duncan, et al, 1977).

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: CONCEPT AND PROGRAMS

NFE CONCEPT AND BACKGROUND

For most authors non-formal education is synonymous with out-of-school education. But still, the simple "out-of-school" definition includes such a huge amorphous field that it helps very little to identify the concept. The furthest we can progress towards conceptual clarity is to adapt the definition to specific contexts regarding each functional issue of education (Grandstaff, 1978).

It is much much easier to find the roots (the beginning) and to follow the development of formal education in the available literature than it is to find historical records on non-formal education, but it is not difficult to imagine the process of synthesizing and passing along information occurring

long before history was recorded (Salinger, 1979).

Many have been the movements, groups, and persons which have used non-formal educational approaches to accomplish their multiple goals (i.e. religious, philosophical, cultural, political, etc.) throughout the history of humanity. The Bible talks about Jesus and His Apostols carrying the Word of God and His Doctrine all over the known world. The world history talks about the non-formal seminar approach used by Plato to teach his philosophy. In the history of any community in the world we find countless cultural values, skills and traditions which were transmitted before writing from one generation to the other by the non-formal educational approach. The history of the Dominican Republic talks about the important role of the theatre used by Juan Pablo Duarte and his group "Los Trinitarios" in the 1840's to prepare the Dominican people for independence from Haiti. Examples of non-formal education can be found at any time and at any place in the history of humanity. Nevertheless, only after a close revision of the formal system was non-formal education recognized, studied, and supported as an instrument for the achievement of educational goals, especially those associated with national development (Grandstaff, 1978). These revisions, made during the 1960's, have revealed many failures of the formal educational system.

NFE PROGRAMS

Strategies, means of communication and methodology for achieving educational goals through non-formal means vary depending on the particular conditions of the communities where those goals need to be reached. The NFE Exchange (February, 1978) talks about many different programs which use entertainment (songs, drama, dance, literature, puppets, shows, etc.) by various means (radio, theatre, T.V., visits, meetings, etc.) to generate awareness about inequitable social conditions and/or to present messages about health, agriculture, family planning and other important matters.

Some skills training programs for adults have had successful results in

different parts of the world.

In Africa

The Plateau Board for Integrated Education for Development in Jos, Nigeria, trains the handicapped and other villagers to produce appropriate tools for rural areas. This project enables the villagers and farmers to identify their own problems and improve their production through the use of appropriate implements (Eaves, 1977).

A mixed vegetable scheme for women in the Western Division of the Gambia trains the women in new onion growing techniques and integrates them to the economical process as income-generators (Morss, Elliot R., et al, 1975).

In Asia

The Afghanistan's Program of Agricultural Credit and Related Services through Cooperatives has an integrated approach to agricultural development. Designed to improve agricultural production and farmer's living standards, the program's two dimensions are: (1) providing for credit, production prerequisites, extension, storage, processing and marketing through cooperatives; and (2) strengthening national agricultural training facilities (Ahmed and Coombs, 1975).

The Malaysia's Federal Land and Development Authority seeks to provide participants in its land development and settlement program with integrated training in a wide variety of skills. These range from agricultural to the management and social skills needed to develop a cohesive and progressive community (FAO, 1976).

In Latin America

The Dominican Republic's Secretariat of Agriculture is the coordinator of a Programa Integrado de Desarrollo Agropecuario (PIDAGRO) whose scope extends from settlement and credit to technical assistance in all the skills necessary to develop the affected communities. This program integrates all the governmental institutions which have to do with agricultural

development; such as banks, cooperatives and association promotion, extension, marketing, investigation and so on.

A Mobil Training Program in Colombia, the Promoción Popular Rural offers skills training to a variety of men and women in the rural sector. Instructors are responsible for adapting the curriculum to the needs of the communities and to encourage participants to help select and plan the course. Organizers consider this participation essential to the program's success (Ahmed and Coombs, 1975).

The changes caused by non-formal education programs on behavior, agriculture and industrial productivity are evident (Simkins, 1978).

The programs on non-formal education for adults are more efficient than the formal education used for children. It has been confirmed scientifically, operationally, and pragmatically by many programs that adults can learn better and faster than children (Delcon, 1978). The experiences that the adults have accumulated and their attitude towards the teacher make the learning process less affected by the "subject-object" concept and more responsive to a genuine democratic reciprocal relationship. This is why the chance to escape from oppression is greater for adult education than for the formal system of the children (Delcon, 1978).

TWO VERY SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Programs with much deeper socio-political implications can be accomplished through a non-formal educational approach. But these programs have been effective in achieving their objectives of changing the status quo with respect to development goals, the pattern of social incentives, and the role of education in the development process primarily within a radical or revolutionary atmosphere (Simkins, 1978).

This has been the case of the United Republic of Tanzania which also has developed many programs on adult education (Hall, 1975), and also the case of Cuba's Educational Revolution (Gillette, 1972; and Kozol, 1978). When

these radical attitudes can not be assumed something can be done by other means. Bergsma (1978), suggests that "These (non-formal educational) programs often do not require high current expenditure, can be carried out by para-professionals or practitioners, can utilize peer planning, can harness voluntary groups, special interests groups, youth groups, and religious organizations."

N.F.E. IMPROVEMENT: EXTENSION SERVICE AND SUGGESTIONS

STRUCTURE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC EXTENSION SERVICE

To understand the structure and function of the Extension Service of the Dominican Republic we have to start from the upper level represented by the Secretariat of Agriculture whose structure is responsible for the implementation of any national development program.

(1) Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura (SEA) - one institution that integrates all the institutions related to agricultural development. It has six sub-secretariats and seven regional Directors.

(2a) Sub-Secretaría de Investigación, Extensión y Capacitación Agropecuaria - this sub-secretariat coordinates all that which is related to investigation, extension, and training on Agriculture. this sub-secretariat has three departments (one for each specialization).

These upper levels are in or near the Capital.

(2b) Dirección Regional Agropecuaria - represents the SEA in each of the seven regions into which the country is divided to decentralize certain functions from the Capital (SEA). As the Secretariat of Agriculture has sub-secretariats and regional directors, the Regional Director has divisions and Zonal Directions.

(2b-1) División de Extensión, Capacitación y Organización Rural - this division coordinates all that which is related to extension, training, and group organization in the rural area of the respective region.

(2b-2) Direción Zonal Agropecuaria - represents the functions of the Regional Director in each of the various zones in which the region is divided. It may have some sub-zones.

(2b-2.1) Sub-Zona Agropecuaria - this unit has one Extension Agent and one or more Extension Sub-agents.

Area Agropecuaria - each area is the responsibility of a sub-agent. This is the unit more closely related to the participants in the process of development.

The Extension Service has been functioning for many years in the Dominican Republic as just a secondary department with a few technicians.

After the late 1960's, the Extension Service became more and more important. Now, this service is responsible for the most important programs which have to do with community development. The philosophy of the Extension Service is to work for the integral development of the rural family.

At the beginning of the developmental programs such as Plan Integrado de Dasarrollo Agropecuario (PIDAGRO), by early 1970's, all plans and decisions had been at the upper levels. But things have been changing and the middle levels of the organization have had more active participation. (Also, it was not possible to include up-to-date information about the implementation and evaluation of non-formal education in the Dominican Republic and I lost contact with these programs two years ago).

Since this paper attempts to be applicable not only to the Dominican Republic but also to other developing countries, some of the suggestions are, perhaps, presently being applied in the Dominican Republic.

Sometimes it is possible to generalize when talking about developing countries. Simpkins (1978), says that the non-formal education in developing countries has been based on an essentially technical view of the planning process which takes only limited recognizance of the socio-political framework within which education is embedded.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The following suggestions are based on my observations during three years (1974-77) working for the Extension Service of the Dominican Republic and literature review. The explanation of each of the concepts contained in the suggestions is beyond the scope of this paper; however, detailed information may be found in the literature cited.

(1) A preliminary evaluation or diagnosis of the particular area should be the first step in planning any non-formal educational program. This diagnosis will be the base for comparison and future evaluation. Also, by a preliminary study, one can determine the salient characteristics of the community and its needs.

(2) The trainers and the extension agents should be trained not only in technical skills but also in the socio-cultural origin and values of the participants (trainees).

(3) Organized groups (associations, cooperatives, etc.) should be formed, assisted, and encouraged. These groups are the most efficient way for the participants to become aware of their reality by sharing problems solutions and experiences with their peers. Also, group-communications methods tend to be more efficient than massive - and individual communication methods.

(4) Natural leaders should be carefully selected from the community by the participants themselves, preferably. In this way these leaders will have the support of the community. Furthermore, the leader of a community is a more effective agent of change than any technician or professional from any university.

(5) I strongly suggest that any single program, course, curriculum, or any approach which has to do with the development of a community should be selected, planned and decided by the participants of that specific community. In this way, these approaches will represent the needs and

the feeling of the community.

(6) The training should start from the leaders. The leaders as well as other interested participants should be encouraged to participate in training programs to form paraprofessionals, promoters, village health workers, barefoot doctors or managers, community animators, or whatever function is needed by the community in the absence of professionals.

(7) Those paraprofessionals should be continuously assisted and supported by the respective professionals and technicians by frequent visits, supervision and meetings especially in the first stages of the programs.

(8) The programs should be constantly revived by radio, songs, T.V., theatre, written information, etc., to keep the attention and the interest of the participants.

(9) Finally, a continuous evaluation and adaptation is essential for the effectiveness of the program. The non-formal education should always be a dynamic process for the solution of current and near-future problems.

Strategies for achieveing the goals of non-formal education may vary even among communities depending on the needs and the resources available. The methodology used to solve a problem in a community may not necessarily be the best approach to solve a similar problem in another community.

SUMMARY

The world's population trend and food supplies obligate more efficiency from the world's dwellers. Numerous programs in the world give evidence that non-formal education is the best approach to achieve this efficiency. To assure the effectiveness of any non-formal educational program, the direct and active help of the participants in the selection and planning of the programs is essential. Equally important is a continuous evaluation and adaptation of programs to the emerging problems and dynamic conditions of a development process.

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